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A LETTER FROM A VIRGINIAN TO THE Members of the Congreſs TO BE HELD AT PHILADELPHIA, ON The Firſt of SEPTEMBER, 1774.

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A

LETTER

FROM A

VIRGINIAN

TO THE

Members of the Congress

TO BE HELD AT

PHILADELPHIA,

ON

The 5th of SEPTEMBER, 1774.

A

LETTER, &c.

GENTLEMEN,

IN times of public danger, every man has a right to offer his advice; there are ſome men who think it their duty to do it, although on common occaſions they may be naturally too diffident of their own opinions, or too indolent, to give themſelves the trouble to obtrude them on the world. If ſuch men happen to miſtake their talents, not from vanity, but from an exceſs of zeal, and meddle officiouſly with matters above

 their

their reach, they may be forgiven on the ſcore of their intention: Even a modeſt man is apt to over-rate his own judgment where his affections and intereſts are deeply concerned.

My zeal therefore in the common cauſe muſt ſerve for my excuſe, if in the courſe of this letter I ſhould give my opinion more confidently than I ought to do, and ſeem to think myſelf, which is a very common caſe, much wiſer than I am.

You are ſoon to meet on the moſt ſerious occaſion that ever preſented itſelf to this country ſince its exiſtence.

The harmony which ſubſiſted, with little or no interruption, between Great-Britain and her Colonies, from their very infancy until of late, is in danger of being deſtroyed for

for ever. The habits of kindneſs and affection, on one ſide, and of reſpect and obedience, on the other (which prevailed during ſo long a period, were in the higheſt degree conducive to the proſperity of this country in particular, and are ſtill neceſſary to its ſecurity and happineſs) are changed into murmurings, diſcontents, and reproaches; and will ſoon end, without ſome very extraordinary interpoſition, in mutual and implacable hatred. Complaints of grievances, real or imaginary, are heard from one end of theſe Colonies to the other; the minds of the people appear to be agitated as at ſome great criſis; they wiſh, by a public conſultation, to be aſſured of the general opinion, by a repreſentation of every province, to collect the calm, deliberate determination of all the provinces, to eſtabliſh ſome public mark of mutual confidence, that they may hold it up to the parent

country, in all its weight and importance. For this purpoſe, Gentlemen, you are delegated to the Congreſs. An abſolute, perfect repreſentation of the people, never exiſted perhaps, but in theory. You, it is true, have not been ſummoned, or convened, by any formal conſtitutional authority, or inveſted with any legiſlative powers: But you have been choſen as freely as the circumſtances of the times would admit; with leſs cabal and intrigue than is uſually employed for a ſeat in many of our legal provincial Aſſemblies, and without even the ſuſpicion of venality, which is but too frequently and too generally practiſed among us for that purpoſe. Your perſons, characters and principles, are familiarly known to your conſtituents; you have been recommended by the moſt honourable of all intereſts, the general opinion of your knowledge, abilities and virtues. We look up to you as the oracles of our country; your opinions will

have

have the effect of laws, on the minds of the people, and your reſolves may decide the fate of America. All orders of men, who enjoy the happineſs of living under a free government, may boldly aſſume the character of politicians; they inherit a right to it as much as the proudeſt Peer inherits a right to his ſeat in Parliament, however ridiculous the proportion may appear to the conceit and arrogance of men who think themſelves born to domineer over their fellow-creatures at pleaſure. High birth and fortune, when they are not abuſed, confer the ſolid and ſplendid advantages of education and accompliſhments, extenſive influence, and incitement to glory; but they give no excluſive title to common ſenſe, wiſdom, or integrity. The loweſt orders of men in ſuch a country, have an unalienable property in their induſtry, their liberty, and their lives, and may be allowed to ſet ſome value at leaſt on the only property they can boaſt

boaſt of: Theſe may be all endangered, or loſt, by the conduct of their Governors; they have therefore a right, as freemen, to examine their conduct, to cenſure, to condemn it; without this right the freeſt government on earth would ſoon degenerate into the rankeſt tyranny. The great outlines, the fundamental principles of our conſtitution, are within the reach of almoſt every man's capacity; they require little more than leiſure to ſtudy them, memory to retain them, and candour to form a a true judgment of them: unhappily for the order and peace of ſociety, this ineſtimable privilege is but too often abuſed. Men in general are governed more by their temper than their judgment; they have little leiſure and ſtill leſs inclination, to inform themſelves exactly of the neceſſary conſtitutional powers of the ſupreme Magiſtrate, or of their own legal rights; they have been often told that liberty is a very great

bleſſing;

bleſſing; they talk inceſſantly of it, they find ſomething inchanting in the very ſound of the word; aſk them the meaning of it, they think you deſign to affront them; puſh them to a definition, they give you at once a deſcription of the ſtate of nature. Their ideas of the nature, origin and conditions of civil ſociety in general, are juſt as confuſed and inaccurate; they take their political as they do their religious opinions (upon truſt) from the nurſery, the company they fall into, or the profeſſions and ſcenes in which they are accidentally engaged. They find the movement of the paſſions a more eaſy and agreeable exerciſe than the drudgery of ſober and diſpaſſionate enquiry. Hand-bills, news-papers, party-pamphlets, are the ſhallow and turbid ſources from whence they derive their notions of government; theſe they pronounce as confidently and dogmatically, as if a political problem was to be ſolved as clearly as a mathematical one;

one; and as if a bold aſſertion amounted to a demonſtration.

Ambition and luſt of power above the laws, are ſuch predominant paſſions in the breaſts of moſt men, even of men who eſcape the infection of other vices, that liberty, legal liberty, would be in continual danger of encroachments, if it were not guarded by perpetual jealouſy. Crafty, deſigning knaves, turbulent demagogues, quacks in politics, and impoſtors in patriotiſm, have in all free governments, and in all ages, availed themſelves of this neceſſary ſpirit of jealouſy; and by broaching doctrines unknown to the conſtitution, under the name of conſtitutional principles, by bold aſſertions, partial repreſentations, falſe colourings, wreſted conſtructions, and tragical declamations, have frequently impoſed on the credulity of the well-meaning, deluded multitude. Thus the moſt honourable

cauſe

cauſe that wiſe and good men can engage in, the cauſe of liberty, has been often diſgraced; nations once as free and as happy as ourſelves, have been frightened into anarchy, plunged into all the horrors of a civil war, and ended their miſerable career in the moſt humiliating and abject ſlavery, until the ſacred name of liberty has become a word of ſcorn and mockery in the mouths of tyrants, and their abandoned minions and emiſſaries.

Such are the calamities which have frequently ariſen from an ardent miſtaken zeal, and from the falſe refinments of ſpeculative men, who amuſe themſelves and the world, with viſionary ideas of perfection, which never were, nor ever will be found, either in public or in private life. You, Gentlemen, cannot even be ſuſpected of being under the influence of ſuch deluſions; there are many among you who are eminently learned, not only in the laws of the

land, but in the laws of nature and nations, in the general laws of reaſon and juſtice, who know their authority and revere them, not as they have been ſometimes explained on the narrow illiberal principles of party ſpirit, but as they have been underſtood and acknowledged by the wiſe of all ages, and have ſerved for the baſis of the moſt perfect ſyſtems of legiſlation. Theſe are the only rules by which all political opinions ought to be tried and examined, by which an honeſt man and a good citizen can form a true judgment of the duty he owes to his King and his Country.

It would have been happy for the world on many melancholy occaſions, that the revealed will of God, which ought to be the ſole rule of every man's conduct, the only tranſcendent authority from which there lies no appeal, had never received but one general interpretation with regard to the

the reciprocal duties of the Sovereign and the people: but even that ſacred and eternal ſtandard of right and wrong, in private life has been alternately perverted and profaned in the political world, by the indiſcreet zeal and wild paſſions of mad enthuſiaſts, or ſlaviſh bigots; has been equally abuſed, to ſerve the purpoſes of a Charles or a Cromwell, of a Gregory or a Venner, to throw a veil over the horrors of anarchy and rebellion, or to ſanctify the ridiculous and damnable doctrines of non-reſiſtance and paſſive-obedience, on a proper application of the general doctrines and principles I have mentioned, to the peculiar and local circumſtances of this country; your proceedings and reſolves ought to depend by a competent knowledge of the character of the times, when the Colony charters were granted; of the Kings, by whom they were granted; of the People, to whom they were granted;

of the purpoſes for which they were aſked and obtained; of the tenor and ſpirit of the charters themſelves, how they were underſtood, and conſtrued by our Anceſtors: by a knowledge in ſhort of the hiſtory of our country, we may diſcover the general conſtitution of the Colonies, and be able to judge whether the preſent diſcontents are founded on truth or ignorance.

By a due and candid examination of this very intereſting ſubject, it may perhaps appear, that the character of the times, when moſt of the charters were originally granted, bore very little reſemblance to the preſent times; that the ineſtimable privileges of a modern Engliſhman, might indeed be found, in ſome degree, in the letter of the law, but had never been enjoyed, were generally very imperfectly underſtood, and rarely claimed by our anceſtors; that even theſe legal, conſtitutional privileges were

were encumbered with a thouſand legal cuſtoms, which they patiently ſubmitted to, although they would exceed the patience of a modern Frenchman; that they felt and diſcovered infinitely more zeal for their religious, than for their civil liberty, and would have been contented with half the privileges their poſterity enjoy for an act of toleration. It will appear, that the Kings, by whom the charters were granted, were not deſpotic Kings; that they conſtitutionally poſſeſſed the executive, not the ſupreme legiſlative power, of which they only made a part; that in all queſtions of magnitude, they were under the control of the other parts of the legiſlative power. That our anceſtors were ſubjects of the Kings of England, not as the inhabitants of Guyenne formerly were, or as thoſe of the Electorate of Hanover are now, but ſubjects of an Engliſh parliamentary King; Engliſhmen in the fulleſt ſenſe of the word, with

the ſame habits and manners, ſpeaking the ſame language, governed by the ſame maxims, cuſtoms, and laws, with ſcarce any diſtinction, but the latitude and longitude of their new reſidence.

That if their charters were granted without the concurrence of parliaments, it was not becauſe a parliament had no right to interfere, but becauſe they did not in thoſe days appear of importance enough to be agitated in the great council of the nation.

That although by their charters, our anceſtors were empowered to make by-laws for their own local convenience, they were nevertheleſs expreſsly and formally reſtrained from making laws repugnant to the laws of England; and were univerſally underſtood, both there and here, to owe, in common with all

all Engliſhmen, an obedience to the laws, from which no King could releaſe them, becauſe no King could diſpenſe with the laws. That from this parliamentary authority, they never wiſhed, until of late, to be emancipated, but would rather have fled to it for protection, from the arbitrary encroachments of a James, or a Charles, armed with the uſurpations, and abuſes, of privy ſeals, benevolences, proclamations, ſtar chambers and high commiſſion courts, and from the enormities of the two ſucceeding reigns; that ſuch were the practices of the times, when our early charters bear their dates, that if they were not granted by parliamentary Kings, they were granted by tyrants, and we ſhall gain nothing by recurring to firſt principles.

That no political ſociety can ſubſiſt, unleſs there be an abſolute ſupreme power lodged ſomewhere in the ſociety, has been univer-

univerſally held as an uncontrolable maxim in theory, by all writers on government, from Ariſtotle down to Sidney and Locke, and has been as univerſally adopted in practice, from the deſpotiſm of Morocco, to the republic of St. Marino; as long as government ſubſiſts, ſubjects owe an implicit obedience to the Laws of the ſupreme power, from which there can be no appeal but to Heaven. We for ſome years paſt have been multiplying ineffectual reſolves, petitions, and remonſtrances, and advancing claims of rights, &c. our petitions have at laſt been neglected, or rejected, or cenſured; the principles on which we found our claims, have been formally denied. To what, or to whom, ſhall we have recourſe? Shall we appeal to the King of Maſſachuſetts Bay, to the King of Connecticut, to the King of Rhode Iſland, againſt the King of Great Britain, to reſcind the acts of parliament of Great Britain, to diſpenſe with

with the Laws, to which as a neceſſary and efficient part of that body, he has ſo recently given his aſſent? Ridiculous as theſe queſtions may appear, I am afraid they are but too much of a piece with doctrines which have been lately broached, inculcated every where, and almoſt every where received. The Colonies are conſtitutionally independent of each other: They formally acknowledge themſelves loyal and dutiful ſubjects of his Majeſty George the Third; but ſeverally claim an exemption from the authority of the Britiſh parliament. A doctrine ſo repugnant to the ideas of all our fellow-ſubjects in Great Britain, can, I truſt, have no place in your aſſembly. The buſineſs you have to tranſact, is too ſerious to be trifled with; the confidence repoſed in you, too ſacred to be ſacrificed to idle ſophiſtry and viſionary diſtinctions; the fate of America, may depend on your reſolves; they ſhould be founded on prin-

ciples that are plain and intelligible, that are marked with the authority of univerſal opinions and truths.

The ſupreme power of the Britiſh parliament over her Colonies, was ever, till very lately, as univerſally acknowledged, by ourſelves, as by our fellow-ſubjects in England. It uſurps no claim to infallibility in its opinions, but gives the ſubject a legal right of petitioning, remonſtrating, of propoſing plans of reformation and redreſs. Nevertheleſs, though it pretends not to infallibility, like all other governments, it requires an implicit obedience to its laws, and has a right to enforce it. A tribe of ſavages unreſtrained by laws, human or divine, may live in ſome harmony, and endure for ages, becauſe in the ſtate of nature there are at the moſt but two or three ſubjects to contend about, and the individuals are reciprocally over-awed by the natural rights of pri-

vate

vate revenge. But in civil ſociety, compoſed as it commonly is, of ſuch an infinite number of heterogeneous and diſcordant principles and intereſts, in trade, in politics, and religion, where ſubjects of contention preſent themſelves by thouſands every hour; no conſtitution can ſubſiſt a moment, without a conſtant reſignation of private judgment to the judgment of the public.

What part then, Gentlemen, have you left you to act, but to propoſe, with the modeſty of ſubjects, ſome practicable plan of accommodation, and to obey? Shall the time of ſo reſpectable an aſſembly be ſquandered, in advancing claims of right, that have been urged and rejected a thouſand times; that have been heard, conſidered, ſolemnly debated, and decided by the only power on earth, who has a right to decide them? Shall the opinions and

deſires of a ſmall part of the community, prevail againſt the opinions and deſires of the majority of the community? What new ſpecies of eloquence can be invented to perſuade? What new logic to convince the underſtandings of our fellow-ſubjects? Shall the Britiſh ſenate be governed by the pernicious maxims of a Poliſh diet, and the *veto* of a ſingle member, or of a few members, however diſtinguiſhed by extraordinary wiſdom and virtue, obſtruct or ſuſpend, or annul the legiſlation of a great nation?

Thoſe wiſe and virtuous citizens themſelves hold ſuch doctrines in deriſion. While a queſtion is in agitation, they debate with freedom, but they claim no blind ſubmiſſion to their opinions, no authority, but the authority of their arguments. They arrogate not to themſelves, a monopoly of all the wiſdom, and all the

virtue in the nation. When the queſtion is decided, they ſubmit their private ſpeculative opinions, to the opinion of the majority, to the law of the land. They revere the law, and make it the rule of their conduct.

You, therefore, Gentlemen, the delegates of a very numerous and reſpectable people, will ſurely think it below the dignity of your character, to aſſemble, with the paſſions and language of a common town meeting, to ſit in judgment, like ſome foreign imperial power on the decrees of a Britiſh legiſlature; to arraign the conduct of adminiſtration, in the lofty emphatic tone of a manifeſto. Can ſuch proceedings anſwer any purpoſe, but the dangerous purpoſes of exaſperating and provoking the indignation and vengeance of all orders and degrees of men in the parent country? Of alienating the affections of

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the people here, ſeducing them from their allegiance, inflaming their paſſions, and exciting them to popular tumults and inſurrections? The order and tranquillity of government frequently depend more upon the manners and morals of the people, than upon their laws and inſtitutions. For the honour of our native country, there are, I believe, few inſtances on record of any people under a free government, who have paſſed through the ſame length of period, with ſo few civil commotions, though the powers of government have never been vigilantly exerted, nor the laws held in any extraordinary veneration. But the manners and morals of our countrymen are undebauched and innocent, compared with thoſe of the inhabitants of older countries, where the inſtruments of corruption, and the incitements to vices and crimes are more general. The danger is nevertheleſs the ſame, or greater. There are no

people

people on earth more ſecure from the humiliating effects of poverty, more ſuperior to the ſmiles or frowns of power, more unawed by the diſtinctions of birth and fortune, more confident or tenacious of their own opinions, or more on a level with all the world in their converſation and behaviour. The paſſions of ſuch men, agitated by falſe principles, and miſtaken zeal, are more dangerous to the repoſe of the world, than the frenzy of the moſt diſſolute and abandoned ſlaves. You will ſurely beware how you inflame the minds of ſuch honeſt, deluded citizens, or the time may come, perhaps it is not very diſtant, that you will wiſh, when it will be too late, to calm the ſtorm you have raiſed, and will tremble every moment, leſt it burſt on your own heads.

Upon the ſubject of a non-importation and non-exportation agreement, I am at a

loſs

loſs what to ſay; it has been ſo often and ſo warmly recommended, as a ſpecific remedy for all our complaints, has received the ſanction of ſuch general authority, that I am afraid it will look like an affront to the underſtandings of my fellow-citizens, an apoſtacy from my native country, to inſinuate the leaſt doubt of its efficacy. Yet let me moſt earneſtly conjure you, by the common love we bear to that country, by the gratitude we owe to the parent country, by the important truſt repoſed in you, as you value your preſent and future peace, and the intereſts and happineſs of your poſterity; beware how you adopt that meaſure, how you engage in that ſtrange conflict of ſullenneſs and obſtinacy, till you have given it the moſt calm and ſerious deliberation.

The efficacy of the meaſure, admitting it to be a practicable one, depends, I preſume,

ſume, upon the importance of our commerce with Great Britain; it is poſſible that people in general here may have been much deceived in this matter, by partial and exaggerated calculations, made under particular circumſtances, during particular periods, to ſerve the purpoſes of party. It would be difficult, if not impoſſible, to aſcertain the exact value of it. But if we may truſt to the authority of men of eminence, who have treated this ſubject as politicians at large, unbiaſſed by partial, local, or temporary views, men who have traced it through the books of cuſtom-houſes, merchants, brokers, manufacturers, &c. the beſt ſources of information; if we can depend on the opinions of the moſt intelligent merchants of our own country; if we can believe our own eyes, every man of common obſervation, and reflection, muſt be aſſured, that the amount of Britiſh manufactures imported into this country,

is very inconſiderable, compared with the opinions about it, that are ſo induſtriouſly circulated through all the Colonies, and ſo generally received. Let us examine by the ſame rule, the amount of the inland and coaſting trade of Great-Britain, and her foreign trade with all the nations on earth; it will appear infinitely greater, than our countrymen in general (accuſtomed from the vanity natural to all mankind to conſider the little ſcenes and tranſactions immediately under their eyes, as objects of the greateſt magnitude) can form any adequate idea of. The reſources of her trade are infinite, the combinations of it too various and complicated, the revolutions of it too ſudden and frequent, to be eaſily explained or underſtood. But we may judge of it by the reſult and effect of the whole, whenever the aſtoniſhing power of the nation is called forth into exertion. Can we ſeriouſly believe, that this wealth and

power

power is derived almoſt entirely from her North American Colonies? Can we (who by our own confeſſions do not yet enjoy even all the neceſſaries of life) can we reaſonably hope, to ſtarve into compliance, ſo great, and ſo powerful a nation? Shall we puniſh ourſelves, like froward children, who refuſe to eat, when they are hungry, that they may vex their indulgent mothers? Or like deſperate gameſters, ſtake at one throw, our ſmall, but competent and happy fortunes, againſt the ſucceſſive ſtakes, the accumulated wealth of ages? We may teaze the mother country, we cannot ruin her. Let us beware how we engage in ſuch an unequal conteſt, leſt while we are giving her a ſlight wound, we receive a mortal one.

If, notwithſtanding, we are confident, that the meaſure of a non-importation and non-exportation agreement, bids fair to be

a ſucceſsful one, it certainly behoves us as men, and as chriſtians, to be ſure that it is a juſt meaſure. A combination to ruin, or to obſtruct the trade of a fellow-citizen, who happens to differ from us in his religious or political opinions, adopted in paſſion, proſecuted by the intrigues of a cabal, by innuendoes, inſinuations, threatenings, and publicly ſigned by large numbers of leading men, would, I preſume, be a manifeſt violation of the laws of God and man, and would, on conviction, be ſeverely puniſhed in every court of juſtice in the univerſe. In what colours then will appear, the combinations of a large and reſpectable body of ſubjects, againſt the ſupreme power of the community; adopted from the ſame motives, proſecuted by the ſame arts, and publicly ſigned, in the face of the whole world? Happily for us, by the generous and noble ſpirit of the Britiſh conſtitution, our own conſtitution, the crime of treaſon, which in

almoſt

almoſt every other country is vague and undefined, often in the breaſt of a venal and corrupt Judge, and made not to warn, but to enſnare the people, is exactly and circumſtantially aſcertained and defined.

Shall we abuſe the generoſity and beneficence of laws, made for our protection? Shall we ſkulk behind the letter of the law, while we wage war againſt the ſpirit of it? Becauſe our anceſtors had foreſeen the poſſibility of the ſubject's levying arms againſt the ſtate in paſſion and deſpair, but knew no inſtance on record, of their having meditated, in cold blood, its deſtruction, and had therefore made no regular proviſion againſt an enormity, which they preſumed could never happen.

It is, I believe, ſufficiently notorious, that there are great numbers of our countrymen, from one end of the continent to the other, who

who are averſe from this meaſure, ſome of them from opinion, others from intereſt, and many from downright neceſſity.

For the ſake of common humanity, Gentlemen, diſdain to co-operate, with hand-bills, with news-papers, with the high menacing reſolves of common town-meetings; do not conſpire with them, to reduce, under the pains and penalties of diſgrace and infamy, thouſands of your fellow-citizens, to the cruel alternative, of involving themſelves, their wives and children, in indigence and wretchedneſs; or of being publicly branded and pointed out by the frantic multitude, as apoſtates, and traitors to their country.

Let us, in the name of common ſenſe and decency, be conſiſtent. Shall we, Proteus like, perpetually change our ground, aſſume every moment ſome new and ſtrange

ſhape, to defend, to evade? Shall we eſtabliſh diſtinctions between internal and external taxation one year, and laugh at them the next? Shall we confound duties with taxes, and regulations of trade with revenue laws? Shall we rave againſt the preamble of the law, while we are ready to admit the enacting part of it? Shall we refuſe to obey the Tea-Act, not as an oppreſſive act, but as a dangerous, a ſole precedent of taxation, when every poſt-day ſhews us a precedent, which our forefathers ſubmitted to, and which we ſtill ſubmit to, without murmuring? Shall we move heaven and earth, againſt a trifling duty, on a luxury, unknown to nine tenths of the globe, unknown to our anceſtors! deſpiſed by half the nations of Europe! which no authority, no neceſſity compels us to uſe? There are thouſands of honeſt induſtrious families, who have no reſources, but in the conſequences of exportation and importation. Shall we levy a tax upon theſe innocent citizens, a tax unheard-

of,

of, disproportionate, a tax never suggested by the most inhuman tyrant! A tax to the amount of their daily bread? Reflect one moment, on the terms, in which the resolves of every town-meeting on this continent speak of the Boston port-bill; although it is little more than a temporary suspension of the trade of that city, until restitution, which God and man calls aloud for, be made. And although the ports, at a very small distance from Boston, and every other port on the continent, is as free as ever, shall we multiply these calamities ten thousand fold? For such calamities must be the inevitable consequences of a non-importation and non-exportation agreement. You ought therefore to be confident, that it will prove effectual before you adopt it. Can any man seriously believe this, who is tolerably acquainted with the history and present state of these Colonies; who has visited our principal cities and towns, and has

has obſerved by what means they have riſen to their wealth and importance, how they daily increaſe, and how their inhabitants ſubſiſt? The horrid puniſhments, inflicted by deſpotic Princes, are commonly of little avail, againſt a contraband trade, where any trifling extraordinary profit is an irreſiſtible temptation. What can we expect from a looſe agreement, where the ſole ſubſiſtence of thouſands is at ſtake? In all trading nations, where there are duties or prohibitions, there are ſmugglers; there ever were, and ever will be, until we find ſome nation, where every individual is a patriot or a ſaint.

Such an agreement will have the defect and impotence of laws framed on monkiſh ideas of purity, againſt the indelible feelings and paſſions of humanity. Can you hope, by promiſes, by extorted promiſes, to reſtrain men from carrying on a clandeſ-

tine trade with Great Britain, who trade every day with our inveterate enemies, in defiance of all law, and who grow rich by the ſpoils of the fair trader? Will it not rather happen, as it has happened already, that province will ſmuggle againſt province, citizen againſt citizen, till we are weary, and aſhamed of being the dupes of each other, and become the laughing-ſtock of the whole world?

Let us no longer deceive ourſelves with the vain hopes of a ſpeedy repeal of the Tea Act, becauſe we triumphed in the repeal of the Stamp Act; the Acts themſelves are totally different in their principles and their operation; the occaſion by no means ſimilar. We have advanced from one extravagant claim to another, made ſuch ſudden turnings and windings, taken ſuch wild and rapid flights, that the boldeſt of our followers

followers can follow us no longer; our moſt zealous advocates are aſhamed to plead a cauſe, which all men, but ourſelves, condemn. Can we any longer doubt that our friends, on the other ſide of the Atlantic, as well as our enemies, although they may differ in the mode of exerciſing the authority of parliament over us, are almoſt univerſally agreed in the principle? Are we not convinced from a thouſand teſtimonies, that the clamour againſt us, is univerſal, and loud? Is this, Gentlemen, a ſeaſon to frighten the parent country into a repeal? No man of ſpirit in private life, even on the ſlighteſt quarrel, will ſubmit to be bullied, and expoſed to the ſcorn and deriſion of the little circle he lives in. Can we ſeriouſly hope, that a great nation, a proud nation, will be inſulted and degraded, with impunity, by her Colonies, in the face of every rival

kingdom in Europe? Let us then, Gentlemen, relinquiſh for ever, a project fraught with abſurdity and ruin. Let your conſtituents hope, that the occaſion of ſuch an important aſſembly will not be wantonly ſquandered in opprobrious reproaches, in bidding defiance to the mother country, but in digeſting and propoſing ſome new plan of accommodation, worthy her notice and acceptance. Diſputes are generally vain and endleſs, where there are no arbitrators to award, no judges to decree; where arguments, ſuſpected to be drawn from intereſt and paſſion, are addreſſed to intereſt and paſſion, they produce no conviction. We may ring eternal changes upon taxation and repreſentation, upon actual, virtual, and non-repreſentation. We may end as we began, and diſagree eternally: but there is one propoſition, a ſelf-evident propoſition, to which all the world give their aſſent,

aſſent, and from which we cannot withhold ours; that whatever taxation and repreſentation may be, taxation and government are inſeparable. On the ſubject of taxation the authority of Mr. Locke is generally quoted by our advocates, as paramount to all other authority whatever. His Treatiſe on Government, as far as his ideas are practicable with the corrupt materials of all governments, is undoubtedly a moſt beautiful theory, the nobleſt aſſertion of the unalienable rights of mankind. Let us reſpect it as the opinion of a wiſe and virtuous philoſopher and patriot, but let us likewiſe, as good ſubjects, revere the laws of the land, the collected wiſdom of ages, and make them the ſole rule of our political conduct. Let not Mr. Locke be quoted partially by thoſe who have read him, to miſlead thouſands who never read him. When he is brought as an authority,

that

that no ſubject can be juſtly taxed without his own conſent, why do not they add his own explanation of that conſent? *i. e.* "The "conſent of the majority, giving it either "by themſelves, or their repreſentatives "choſen by them." Do we compoſe the majority of the Britiſh community? Are we, or are we not of that community? If we are of that community, but are not repreſented, are we not in the ſame ſituation with the numerous body of copyholders, with the inhabitants of many wealthy and populous towns; in ſhort, with a very great number of our fellow-ſubjects, who have no votes in elections? Shall we affirm that theſe are all virtually repreſented, but deny that we are ſo; and at the ſame time be too proud to ſolicit a repreſentation? Or under the trite and popular pretences of venality and corruption, laugh at it as impracticable? Shall we plunge at once into anar-

anarchy, and reject all accommodation with a government, (by the confeſſion of the wiſeſt men in Europe, the freeſt and the nobleſt government on the records of hiſtory) becauſe there are imperfections in it, as there are in all things, and in all men? Are we confederates, or allies, or ſubjects of Great-Britain? In what code of laws, are we to ſearch for taxation, under the title and condition of requiſition, as we underſtand the word? In what theory of government, ancient or modern? Is it to be found any where on earth, but in modern harangues, modern pamphlets? And in theſe only as temporary expedients. The ſupply of government muſt be conſtant, certain, and proportioned to the protection it affords; the moment one is precarious, the other is ſo too; the moment it fails, civil ſociety expires. We boaſt much of our bountiful compliance with the requiſitions made during

ring the laſt war, and in many inſtances with reaſon; but let us remember and acknowledge, that there was even then more than one rich province that refuſed to comply, although the war was in the very bowels of the country. Can Great-Britain then depend upon her requiſitions in ſome future war a thouſand leagues diſtant from North-America, in which, as we may have no immediate local intereſt, we may look perhaps with little concern.

From the infancy of our Colonies to this very hour, we have grown up and flouriſhed under the mildneſs and wiſdom of her excellent laws; our trade, our poſſeſſions, our perſons have been conſtantly defended againſt the whole world, by the fame of her power, or by the exertion of it. We have been very lately reſcued by her from enemies, who threatened us with

ſlavery

ſlavery and deſtruction, at the expence of much blood and treaſure, and eſtabliſhed after a long war (waged on our accounts, at our moſt earneſt prayers) in a ſtate of ſecurity, of which there is ſcarce an example in hiſtory. She is ever ready to avenge the cauſe of the meaneſt individual among us, with a power reſpected by the whole world. Let us then no longer diſgrace ourſelves by illiberal, ungrateful reproaches, by meanly aſcribing the moſt generous conduct to the moſt ſordid motives: we owe our birth, our progreſs, our delivery to her; we ſtill depend on her for protection; we are ſurely able to bear ſome part of the expence of it; let us be willing to bear it. Employ then, Gentlemen, your united zeal and abilities in ſubſtituting ſome adequate, permanent, and effectual ſupply, (by ſome mode of actual repreſentation) in the place of uncertain,

ineffectual requisitions, or in devising some means of reconciling taxation, the indispensable obligation of every subject, with your ideas of the peculiar and inestimable rights of an Englishman.

These are objects worthy a Congress; measures, that will confer lasting benefits on your country, and immortal honour on yourselves.

If, on the contrary, like independent states, you arrogate to yourselves the sole right of judging and deciding in your own cause; if you persist in denying the supreme power of Parliament, which no Parliament will ever renounce, like independent states, we have no appeal but to the God of battles. Shall we dare lift up our eyes to that God, the source of truth and justice, and implore his assistance in such

ſuch a cauſe? There are cauſes, where, in ſpight of the ridiculous tenets of pious, deluded enthuſiaſts, or of the wicked and monſtrous doctrines of ſlaves and tyrants; the very principles, the original principles on which civil ſociety depends, require, where God and Nature call aloud for reſiſtance. Such cauſes exiſted in the horrid catalogue of oppreſſions and crimes, under a Philip the Second, a Catherine of Medicis, and in the liſt of grievances, during one period at leaſt, of the reign of the ill-educated, the ill-adviſed, the unhappy Charles; on ſuch melancholy occaſions, men of ſentiment, ſpirit, and virtue, the only genuine ſons of liberty, engage in the honourable cauſe of freedom, with God on their ſide, and indignantly ſacrifice every advantage of fortune, every endearment of life, and life itſelf. Do ſuch cauſes exiſt now among us?

Did

Did they ever exiſt? Are they likely to exiſt?

Open, if it be not too late, the eyes of our infatuated countrymen; teach them to compare their happy ſituation, with the wretchedneſs of nine tenths of the globe; ſhew them the general diffuſion of the neceſſaries, the conveniences and pleaſures of life, among all orders of people here; the certain rewards of induſtry, the innumerable avenues to wealth, the native, unſubdued freedom of their manners and converſation; the ſpirit of equality, ſo flattering to all generous minds, and ſo eſſential to the enjoyment of private ſociety, the entire ſecurity of their fortunes, liberty, and lives; the equity and lenity of their civil and criminal juſtice, the toleration of their religious opinions and worſhip.

Teach

Teach them to compare theſe invaluable privileges and enjoyments with the abject and miſerable ſtate of men debaſed by artificial manners, loſt to all generous and manly ſentiment; alternately crouching and inſulting, from the vain and humiliating diſtinctions of birth, place and precedence; trembling every moment for their liberty, their property, their conſciences, and their lives; millions toiling, not for themſelves, but to pamper the luxury and riot of a few worthleſs, domineering individuals, and pining in indigence and wretchedneſs: Save them from the madneſs of hazarding ſuch ineſtimable bleſſings, in the uncertain events of a war, againſt all odds, againſt invaſions from Canada, incurſions of ſavages, revolt of ſlaves, multiplied fleets and armies, a war which muſt begin where wars commonly end, in the ruin of our trade, in the ſurrender of our ports and capitals, in the miſery

of

of thouſands. Teach them in mercy, to beware how they wantonly draw their ſwords in defence of political problems, diſtinctions, refinements, about which the beſt and the wiſeſt men, the friends as well as the enemies of America, differ in their opinions, leſt while we deny the mother-country every mode, every right of taxation, we give her the rights of conqueſt.

FINIS.